



a patient's guide

ScarWork clinic at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre

Patient Information Series PI 84



East and North Hertfordshire
NHS Trust



Mount Vernon
Cancer Centre

Consent

It is a legal requirement to have a signed consent form from you before the start of your treatment.

If you have already been given one of these forms, please bring the completed form with you when you come for your first appointment.

If you have not been given a form, this will be discussed with you at your first appointment.

Identification

Please note that it is a legal requirement for the staff to check your name and details against your treatment sheet every time you attend.

Contact

Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre 020 3826 2555

ScarWork clinic at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre

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What is the ScarWork service at the LJMC?

People who have had surgery as part of their cancer treatment will be offered up to eight ScarWork sessions. **The ScarWork service takes place on Fridays, it started in April 2019 and will end in April 2020. The sessions are held in the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre (LJMC) at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre.** This leaflet explains this service and is for you to keep.

Background

Many people have surgery as part of their cancer treatment. While surgery is life-saving, it may leave scars, which are a natural expression of the body's ability to heal. However, they may cause discomfort in many ways.

Scars may cause itching, tenderness, pain, sleep disturbance and may also limit the body's ability to function properly. Some people no longer like the part of their body that is scarred, or may feel it is no longer part of them. Scars may cause other problems, such as anxiety, depression and disruption of daily activities. Some people may develop post-traumatic stress reactions, loss of self-esteem, or feel stigmatised or dislike their own appearance. These reactions are all normal. Any or all of these may have an effect on quality of life.

What is ScarWork?

ScarWork is a painless, non-invasive light touch therapy. It draws on nearly 30 specialised techniques that can be used to improve the health and feel of scars from surgery or accidents. Developed by Sharon Wheeler in the USA nearly 40 years ago, ScarWork has only recently been introduced into the UK. The Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre is proud to be in the forefront of making this service available to people living with and beyond cancer.

4 ScarWork is delivered without oils or creams. Treatment is relaxing and pain free for the patient.

After treatment, many patients remark that their scars feel softer. People also say they have less discomfort or pain around their scar or elsewhere in their body. Many find that their ability to move improves and becomes easier. The effects of treatment seem to be long lasting. While a single treatment may be effective, generally a series of treatments is desirable.

ScarWork is suitable for scars of any age – whether from surgery that was recent or that took place a long time ago.

ScarWork is not a replacement for conventional treatment and you are expected to continue your usual cancer-related treatments. If you are in doubt, please ask your oncology health professional to advise whether you can have this gentle work on and around your scar.

Who can take part in this service?

This service is available for people who have scars resulting from surgical treatment for any of the following cancer types:

- breast
- colorectal
- gynaecological
- head and neck
- melanoma

This service is open to people living with and beyond cancer who meet ONE of the following:

- previously treated by an oncology health professional at MVCC (eg, oncologist, specialist nurse, speech therapist)
- currently under follow up by an oncology health professional based at MVCC
- having had surgery at a District General Hospital served by MVCC

If in doubt please enquire.

People who are suitable for this service will:

- have scars from surgery related to their cancer treatment
- be female or male, age 18 and over
- have completed active cancer treatment at **least three months previously** (except for immunotherapy)
- be able to give informed consent
- be willing to attend for regular fortnightly treatments at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre on Fridays

This is not suitable for:

- scars that are open, infected, weeping or painful
- keloid scars
- scars where surgical mesh has been used in surgery or repair (except Acellular Dermal Matrix (ADM))
- lymphoedema that requires specialist lymphoedema management
- people who are very frail

It may be helpful to check with your oncology health professional who can advise on whether it is appropriate to begin ScarWork therapy.

Why is ScarWork not suitable for scars with surgical mesh?

There have been reports of internal damage happening when surgical mesh breaks down or moves. Although none of these reports have been associated with ScarWork, current advice is to avoid using ScarWork where mesh has been implanted.

Mesh is commonly used in hernia and prolapse surgery and abdominal construction and may be used in other sites.

Breast reconstruction is an exception to this. Different materials are used, such as Acellular Dermal Matrix (ADM).

However, breast reconstruction where tissue is harvested from the abdomen may include surgical mesh in the abdomen and if so, it is necessary to avoid using ScarWork.

Please check with your surgeon, oncologist or healthcare professional to see if you have had mesh inserted.

What will happen if I am suitable for this treatment?

If you are suitable you may be offered a series of up to eight ScarWork treatments. These will be on a fortnightly basis on Fridays. Contact the LJMC and ask to be referred to the ScarWork service.

The ScarWork therapist will contact you to discuss the service and arrange your appointment for an intake interview. You will be sent information and a medical questionnaire which you will be asked to complete and bring to your intake interview.

What happens at the intake interview?

This interview will last about an hour. The therapist will explain ScarWork and discuss the service with you. This is a chance to ask any questions you may have. The therapist will also discuss the ways the treatment is assessed. This includes questionnaires and photography. Some patients may be invited to have their scar assessed with ultrasound or other tests.

Once it is clear that you understand the service and agree to have this treatment, your medical questionnaire will be collected. You will be asked to sign a consent form and we will ask you to fill in some other questionnaires.

The therapist will assess your scar(s). She will discuss any symptoms you have that are associated with your scar(s) and the effect they are having on you. She will also discuss your overall physical and emotional wellbeing and your goals for treatment.

If you have more than one scar, each will be assessed and you will be asked to decide which is the most bothersome.

Working on an area of the body away from the scar, the therapist will demonstrate some of the techniques used in ScarWork. This is so you can be assured that the treatment is gentle.

Treatment dates (on Fridays) will be discussed with you and details will be sent in the post shortly afterwards.

At this stage, the therapist will write to your oncology health professional(s) and/or general practitioner to inform them that you are having ScarWork therapy.

What will happen when I come for this treatment?

Your treatment appointments will last 50 minutes. You will be asked to make yourself comfortable in the treatment room.

Depending on where your scar(s) is located, you may be asked to remove certain items of clothing so we can access the scar and the area around it. Your modesty will be respected and towels will be used to cover any areas not being treated.

The scar will be assessed and then ScarWork will begin. ScarWork starts on the surface of the skin, then progresses to work on deeper tissues.

You should be comfortable at all stages; your therapist will check with you at intervals to make sure you are comfortable. People who are sensitive about their scars or dislike them being touched usually find this improves within a treatment or two.

The ScarWork treatment will finish with some gentle relaxation. This is so your body can absorb the changes that ScarWork makes.

My scar is sensitive, I don't like having it touched?

If you dislike having your scars touched, it is still possible to have this therapy. The therapist starts by working very gently away from the scar. Much improvement can take place by working in this way. As comfort levels improve, work can progress closer to the scar itself. Big changes to sensitivity can happen within very few sessions. The therapist and patient work together to make sure the patient is always comfortable with ScarWork therapy.

How many treatments will I have?

The service offers up to eight treatments which take place fortnightly. The number of treatments any scar needs will vary depending on the size, age and type of scar. The therapist and patient work together to assess improvements in scars. They will decide together when to move on to another scar or when to stop treatment.

How will this treatment be assessed?

With all new therapies, it is essential to assess them. ScarWork will be assessed with photography, questionnaires and scar measurements.

○ Photography

Photographs can be powerful records of how scars change. Scars will be photographed before and after every ScarWork session.

East & North Hertfordshire NHS Trust has policies to protect information and data and we have a procedure for the taking, handling, storage and use of medical photographs. You will be asked to sign a form giving your consent (permission) to photographs being taken. These will be taken in a way that does not identify you.

The photographs will be password protected and stored on a secure computer drive. They may be used for training or publication in scientific journals; however, your identity will be protected at all times.

- Questionnaires

From time to time, you will be asked to complete questionnaires. These are important as they help us to measure the effects of ScarWork. Please help us by completing questionnaires and returning them as asked. As with the photographs, the answers may be used in presentations or publications in scientific journals. Your identity will be protected at all times.

- Scar measurements

Depending on the nature of each scar, it may be measured in one or more ways. It may be measured with a tape measure to record its length or width. The therapist may measure how stiff the scar tissue is and how flexible it is. Some patients may be invited to have ultrasound measurements taken of their scar. The therapist will discuss these with you as appropriate.

After your ScarWork session

At the end of each treatment, you may see or feel a difference in the scar or surrounding area. Most people report that they also feel relaxed and enjoy a sense of wellbeing. After treatment, it is a good idea to rest and let the body adjust to the changes that ScarWork enables.

When will this service be available?

We have limited funds available from a philanthropic grant from the Milly Apthorp Charitable Trust. This enables us to make this service available for a limited period from April through November 2019. The ScarWork clinic will be on Fridays at the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre.

How might I benefit from this service?

After ScarWork your scar may feel better and look better to you. It may look smaller, lighter and be less noticeable.

ScarWork may also reduce sensations such as:

- numbness
- pain
- itching
- irritation
- sensitivity

Movement may improve as tightness in the surrounding areas is relieved.

Some people report that they have improvements in their quality of life as a result of ScarWork treatment.

These include things like:

- sleeping better
- feeling more relaxed
- being less preoccupied with cancer

What does ScarWork feel like?

ScarWork is pain-free, gentle and relaxing. People report there are some sensations during treatment. These include tingling or 'burning' sensations that occur as nerves awaken and are stimulated. There may be sensations of pulling or feelings of pressure, or warmth as blood comes into the area. Some people feel sensations in other parts of their body. For some people, there may be an emotional release.

Does ScarWork treatment hurt?

Scarwork is very gentle and works at a surface level. The patient's comfort is key. Before starting treatment, the therapist makes it very clear that you must tell her if you experience any discomfort. ScarWork is a therapy where the saying 'no pain, no gain' definitely does NOT apply!

Are there any unpleasant aspects of ScarWork?

ScarWork is a gentle treatment that is generally regarded as being safe. Sometimes, people may become more aware of their scar during treatment.

They may have found events surrounding their surgery upsetting. Some people may find that ScarWork releases emotions associated with the scar which can be helpful.

More commonly, people feel tired after having ScarWork, so it is important to rest following treatment. Mostly, people feel a sense of relief, release or renewal.

Research and evaluation into ScarWork

The Supportive Oncology Research Team (SORT) at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre is in the forefront of research into using ScarWork for people living with and beyond cancer. Part of this relies on collecting information about people's experiences of ScarWork treatment. The questionnaires patients are asked to fill out are part of this activity.

Case studies

From time to time, there is a particularly interesting story about a patient's experience of ScarWork. Such stories may be helpful to other healthcare professionals or patients and can be written for teaching purposes or for publication in scientific journals. You may be invited to have your experience recorded in this way. Your therapist will discuss this with you if it is appropriate.

Cancelling appointments

If you are unable to keep any of your appointments we would like 24 hours notice if possible. This is so that we can give your appointment to somebody else.

Please telephone the LJMC Helpline on 020 3826 2555.

Can I get ScarWork after I have finished treatments at the Centre?

ScarWork is available privately throughout the UK. A list of trained ScarWork therapists is available at:

<https://www.bodyinharmony.org.uk/uk-scarwork-therapists/>

Who can I contact for more information?

Dr Beverley de Valois at the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre via the helpline on: 020 3826 2555

What does this service cost?

The ScarWork service is funded by a philanthropic grant from the Milly Apthorp Charitable Trust. We make no charge for the service. However, should you wish to make a charitable donation towards further development of the ScarWork service and other supportive services at the LJMC, please speak to your therapist or another member of the LJMC team.

Other help and support

The Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre (LJMC) offers information and support to patients and their families and is located next to the Chemotherapy Suite by Gate 3. The staff at the LJMC work as part of the overall team caring for you.

People who have cancer often say that during their illness they experience a range of emotions. Many find it to be a stressful, anxious and confusing time. Please feel free to drop in before, during and after any of your visits to Mount Vernon Cancer Centre to find out more about the LJMC services that you may find helpful.

The volunteers and healthcare professionals at the LJMC provide help, support and information in a relaxed setting to help patients cope with cancer and its treatment.

LJMC services include a range of complementary therapies, counselling, relaxation sessions and financial advice. You can drop in without an appointment or call the LJMC helpline on 020 3826 2555. More information is on the back of this leaflet.

This publication has been produced by the Information team at the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre. Contributors include professionals, patients and carers from Mount Vernon Cancer Centre who have expertise and experience in the topics covered by this publication. All our publications are reviewed and updated regularly. If you would like any details of the references used to write this information please contact the LJMC on 020 3826 2555.

Lynda Jackson 
Macmillan Centre

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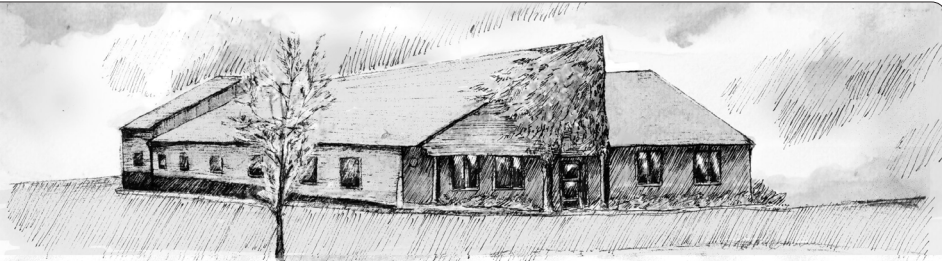
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Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre

... supporting people affected by cancer...

- ① Drop-in centre for support and information
- ① Telephone helpline
- ① Complementary therapies*
- ① Counselling*
- ① Benefits advice*
- ① Relaxation classes
- ① Look Good Feel Better™ beauty workshops
- ① The Way Ahead headwear workshops
- ① Self-help courses

The **Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre** is situated between the Cancer Centre and Gate 3 (White Hill)

Please drop in or call to find out how we may be able to help you

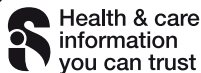
Opening hours: **Monday–Friday: 9.30am–4.30pm**

Mount Vernon Cancer Centre, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2RN

Telephone Helpline: **020 3826 2555**

Website: **www.ljmc.org**

* Service only available to NHS patients under the care of an oncologist based at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre



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